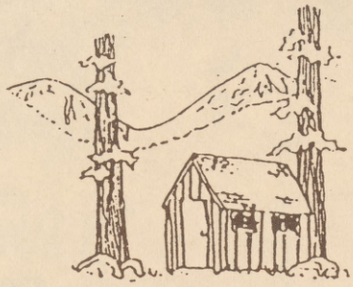


# Mineral King Chronicle

Preserving the Past for a Better Future.

**Volume 7** Number 2

*Newsletter of the Mineral King Preservation Society*
*Fall 1993*

**FROM THE BOARD ROOM**: The Future of the Past [is you].

This issue of the newsletter marks a new beginning for the Mineral King Preservation Society. Change seems to be a buzzword these days, and you will notice several important ones with regard to MKPS.

Foremost is a change in our style. We promise to keep you, the membership, better informed with a new and improved newsletter published twice annually. We have lots of newsworthy items to report... but also remain committed to publish excerpts of the MKPS archives and research program. Be sure to review the membership page carefully. Due to increasing production costs, we will be revising our mailing list to include only current members.

Please take note of our new motto: "Preserving the Past for a Better Future." These seven words say it succinctly, that is, our mission statement. The motto reflects a coming of age as a preservation society.

As we move closer to the eventuality of a Mineral King Historic District, we cannot stress enough how much we need your active support. MKPS needs new board members, docents to staff the Honeymoon Cabin (summer weekends of 1994), committee members to assist with historic structures and merchandising, and curatorial assistants to work on displays. In other words, the time is now for you to become more involved.

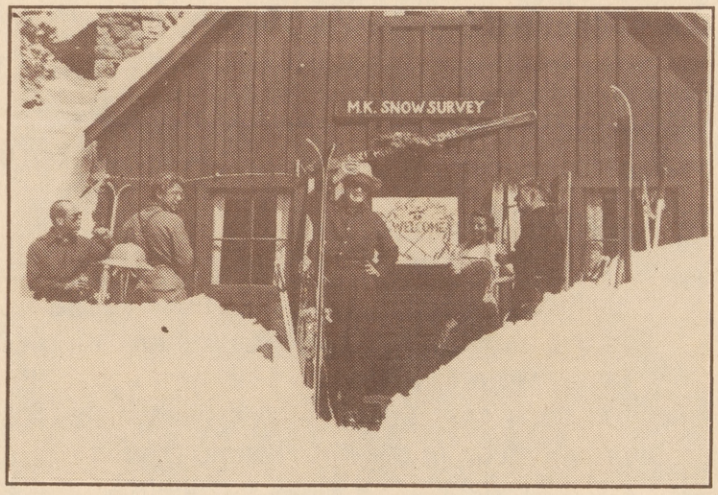
The future of the past is you! Are you content to sit back and let a few make decisions and do all the work? Why not get involved in historic preservation?

Please write or call (209) 734-6150 with your input, suggestions, etc. We want to hear from you, our membership. Here's wishing you and yours a Merry Christmas and all the best this joyous holiday season!

**MKPS Board of Directors**

**AROUND THE SOCIETY**: News and Views

Since our Spring newsletter so much has happened that 1993 will certainly be a memorable year in the annals of MKPS. The Mineral King Road was opened mid-May though winter lingered a bit more dramatically than in the past several seasons. On June 5-6, 1993, MK received a fresh blanket of snow with 20 inches of accumulation at 7,800 feet. What an unforgettable weekend for those visitors caught in the late season storm.




**Members of the Snow Survey toast another glorious Mineral King day, during the winter of 1947-48. A collection of winter photos, documenting early snow surveys, was donated by Henry Brown.**

John Elliott, MKPS Historian, was aboard the Queen Mary at Long Beach on June 5-6. John was spreading the MKPS gospel at the annual conference of the California Preservation Foundation. A number of preservationists talked with John and made a point of relating a MK experience or two of their own. Several folks mentioned the rare combination of history and striking High Sierra scenery. One thing is certain, those who visit MK are left with an indelible image. Most return again and again, especially during the summer when other more popular parks are packed with tourists.

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## The Seventh Annual Picnic in the Park: 1993

The July highlight was the MKPS Seventh Annual Picnic in the Park. It was a time once again for visiting with old friends and meeting new MKPS members.

The program featured Mr. William "Bill" Womack from Springville, a Crabtree descendant who spoke on the history of the "White Chief." Bill did an excellent job of relating the Crabtree story within a "Porterville perspective."

An interesting sidebar of Bill's talk was the southern entrance to MK via Dillon's Mill Road/Hockett Trail. For a time, it was suggested that the proposed Mineral King Road follow a more southerly approach to the mines. Visalians eventually persuaded county officials to grant John Crowley the franchise via the East Fork route. The road was completed in 1879.

James A. Crabtree and his brother, Thomas, were among the original prospectors of the claim which led to the rush to Mineral King in 1873. Bill stated that when the claim was optioned (1875), one Crabtree did indeed reap a return from the White Chief. Thomas Crabtree, a "real" mountain man, used his share to later build his Porterville house. The "old" Crabtree house was built ca. 1905 and is still standing on present-day South Olive Street.

A lively discussion followed Bill's remarks. It seems that there is still a "friendly" rivalry among Porterville and Visalia old-timers. No one was certain as to what has fueled the controversy for more than a century. Most agreed it was started over the competition for high country grazing land between cattle and sheep ranchers.

On the morning after the picnic, Womack and his daughter, Becky, accompanied MKPS hikers to the hauntingly beautiful White Chief bowl. Several members of the expedition reportedly sighted "the spirit of White Chief," immortalized in the colored cliffs high atop White Chief mountain. A sumptuous lunch and good time was had by all. A warm thanks to MKPS member Bill Womack. We salute your efforts in the study of the Crabtrees and their role in Mineral King history.

**********

Stay tuned for information on the Eighth Annual Picnic in the Park scheduled for July 23, 1994. We hope to present an action-packed interpretive program on the Mineral King Road.

## MKPS Publication

July 1993 also marked the completion of *Mineral King Historic District: Contextual History and Description*. The book, a special Mary Dixon Memorial Edition, was dedicated at the annual meeting of the Mineral King District Association. Evander "Van" Dixon and family were in attendance at the August 7th meeting held at the Barton cabin. Van, who turned a spry 90 in August, was also recognized for yeoman efforts on behalf of the preservation of the MK Historic District.

To date, MKPS has distributed more than 150 copies of the contextual history with several being donated to area libraries. To order a copy of the book or other MKPS items by mail, see the flyer enclosed with this newsletter.

Copies of the book are also available at the retail outlets of Curry Printing & Copy Center, 1117 South Mooney Boulevard, Visalia (near COS); Togni-Branch Stationers, 116 E. Main St., Visalia (Downtown); and Mountain Arts, 42268 Sierra Drive, Three Rivers.

## Mineral King Campfire

Were you able to catch one of the NPS ranger-led heritage walks during the 1993 summer season? Several of these walks conducted the visitor on a tour of the cabins to examine the "rustic architecture of Mineral King." These programs were the idea of Ranger Steve Brower who hopes to expand the MK interpretive history program in the future.

As a season finale, Ranger Steve invited MKPS to present a Labor Day Weekend campfire program. Janet Fleek and Jock Peterson had the throng in stitches with a humorous look at the MK cabin experience. Kudos to Ranger Brower for his earnest attempt to promote public awareness of the unique history of Mineral King.

Cut here and mail to MKPS, 2936 South West Street, Visalia, CA 93277

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Speaking of public awareness, MKPS also furnished the program for the Tulare County Historical Society Annual Dinner meeting held at Sequoia Mining Company on October 10, 1993. The setting was the historic Merryman Station at Exeter and proved an excellent forum to update the community on MKPS activities.

A number of county dignitaries were in attendance including Supervisor Bill Maze. President Kevin Caskey thanked MKPS on behalf of the Tulare County Historical Society for their commitment to preservation in Mineral King.

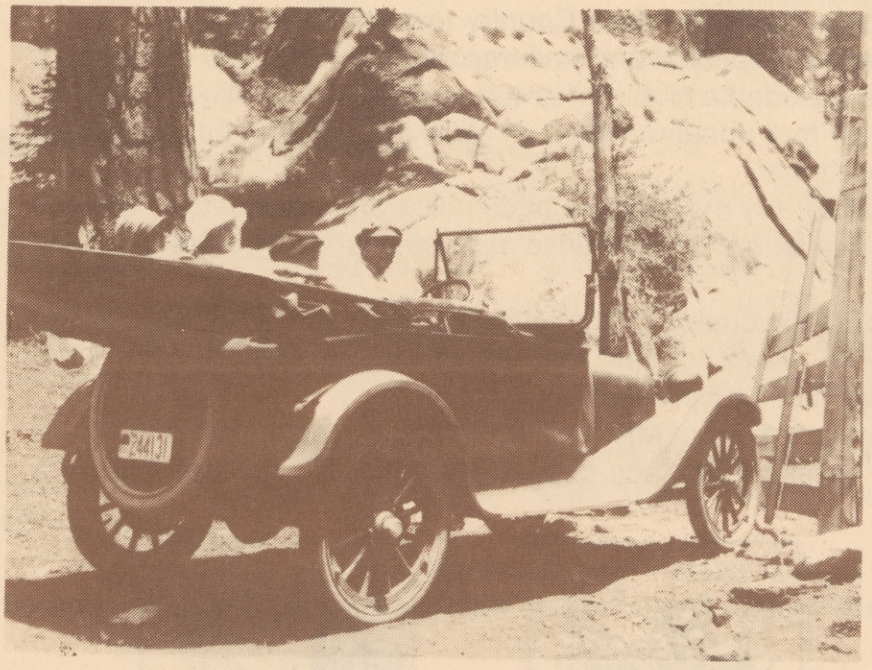
FYI: Check your local listings for upcoming MKPS programs to be held at Mineral King National Bank (Visalia) on December 17, Visalia Kiwanis (Convention Center) on January 18, and Three Rivers Historical Society (to be announced).

## UPDATE: Mineral King Historic District

In October 1993, in cooperation with the NPS-Ash Mountain, MKPS submitted "a request for a determination of eligibility" for the Mineral King Historic District. The primary package has been delivered to the Office of Historic Preservation in Sacramento. This landmark work included a summary contextual statement with more than 100 original photographs, a MKPS contextual history book, and a copy of the PBS video entitled "San Joaquin Illustrated: The Treasure of Mineral King."

Copies of all package components were sent to NPS officials in Washington, D.C., Denver, and the Western Regional Office in San Francisco. In addition, Congressman Rick Lehman (19th District) was presented with a package at the Town Hall Meeting held in Three Rivers on October 16, 1993. Several other key officials will also be reviewing the package.

The completion of the determination package is an important step toward the official designation of the Mineral King Historic District. Once the area is determined eligible for inclusion in *The National Register of Historic Places*, resources may be nominated as part of a multiple property submission. The initial nomination (scheduled for 1994) will include trails, mining properties, the Mineral King Road, and the cabin community.



The Sweet family, Adolph (driver), Carrie (rear center), and Sol (right rear), arrive July, 1914, at "the Gate." The Sweets, prominent in Tulare County history, maintained a cabin in the old "Beulah" townsite in East Mineral King. Courtesy of Ardeen Sweet.

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## FROM THE HISTORIAN'S DESK

*By John F. Elliott*
P.O. Box 728
Three Rivers, CA 93271
(209) 561-4843

Greetings to the MKPS community. Another eventful summer has come and gone. It was great to visit with so many of you during one of several MKPS inspection tours of the district.

As you know, MKPS is proposing a "historic sign" for each cabin. This is only the beginning of the MKPS commitment to interpret the unique history of Mineral King. Many of you will be receiving a separate mailing with more details after the January board meeting.

I want to take this opportunity to extend my warmest appreciation to Sheryl Hack, MKPS Architectural Historian. Sheryl made the most of a hectic schedule to work with us in early August. In September, she authored an excellent treatise on MK architecture for inclusion in the NR determination package.

Sheryl concluded that the Mineral King cabin form had evolved from the basic mining cabin being creatively adapted to the special set of circumstances at Mineral King. Sheryl's findings were based upon the premise that this phenomenon had occurred within the context of a national recreation movement.

The majority of the cabins may be described as the "board camp" type. Shared features include frame construction with milled siding, a steeply pitched gable roof, a foundation of wooden posts set upon rocks, a sleeping loft, and an open front and/or rear porch.

Kudos to Ms. Hack for a job well done of the highest professional standards. We hope to publish more on Mineral King architecture in an upcoming MKPS publication.

**CCPH Conference 1993**

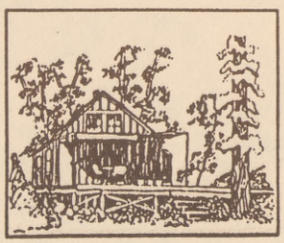
During October 21-23, I had the opportunity to represent MKPS at the annual meeting of the California Committee for the Promotion of History (CCPH). The conference theme was mining and convened in the historic California Gold Country town of Nevada City.

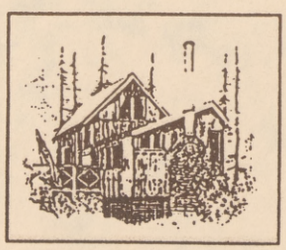
The sessions and tours were exceptional and underscored the incredible potential of MKPS. The opening day session included a highly informative workshop on filing NR forms. It was interesting to learn that only four documentation projects in California have qualified for the NR in a multiple property format.

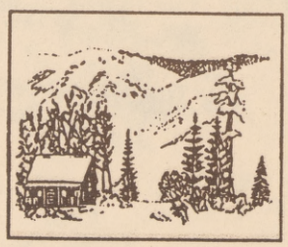
The reason for this is two-fold: (1) the process is complex and intimidating; and (2) there are few areas left in California where large chunks of historic landscape are available for preservation.

If the Mineral King Historic District qualifies in a multiple property format it would be the fifth project (in California) to do so. Keep in mind that the previously listed districts were nominated when the process was less complicated.

The documentation and interpretation of MK is an outstanding opportunity to integrate natural and cultural resources. What better place to preserve historic landscape than in a national park?







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Saturday featured an "insiders" tour especially for CCPH members of the Empire Mine State Historic Park in Grass Valley. That's right, Empire Mine! Only this one was operated for 106 years. Hardrock miners worked in dark, underground tunnels. Early miners wore "soft" hats and worked by the light of candles. Several generations of mules spent their entire lives never seeing the light of day.

More than 367 miles of underground shafts and tunnels were excavated below the town of Grass Valley. The main shaft of the Empire Mine eventually reached a depth of more than 11,000 feet and produced 5.8 million ounces of gold. It is more than coincidental that MK promoters named their glory hole after the renowned Grass Valley venture to the north.

My personal favorite of the exhibits was the early "5-stamp" mill. It was one set of five of the 80 stamps once used at the Empire Mine. Each stamp weighed 1,750 pounds and crushed walnut-sized material. Many of the parts of this exhibit were easy to recognize, having seen many of the same remnants scattered around the Mineral King Valley.

After touring the mining exhibits at Coloma and Grass Valley this year, it only underscores the need for more interpretive exhibits at Mineral King. We must not lose sight of the fact that the mining era in Mineral King is only the foreword in our story. Each of the themes/property types, i.e. the historic landscape, needs to be explained within the context of Mineral King history.

Interpretive exhibits, like this one housed in the Mineral King Ranger Station, are an important and ongoing activity of MKPS.

## Mineral King Community History

At the October meeting, the MKPS Board authorized the preliminary research necessary to compile a new MKPS book entitled *Origins of Community: A Family History of Mineral King*. The publication will profile the role of several pioneer families in the history of Mineral King.

The publication, which has been in the "talking" stage for years, will feature MK personalities via oral history in a readable blend of archival material and photos. We are currently seeking "publication partners" who may be interested in sponsoring this important work.

Also, we are seeking the input of members who might have relevant material or want to assist in the oral interview program. These "taped" sessions will have a permanent place in the MKPS archives.

All interested inquiries are welcome. Please contact me direct at the Three Rivers numbers listed above. Have a safe and prosperous New Year!

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## 1994 MEMBERSHIP DUES

If you have not done so already... the time is now to send in your renewal for 1994. Have you recently moved or had a change of area code? Please furnish MKPS with the updated information.

**Please note the number on your address label.** This number denotes the current status of your membership. For example, if the number is 1995 then it indicates that your MKPS dues are paid through that calendar year... 1992, 1991, and so forth. If your label does not contain a number it means that we met you at an MKPS meeting, or you made a contribution or a merchandise purchase. We sincerely hope those in all mailing categories will want to update their MKPS membership. Due to increased production costs in 1994, we will be revising our mailing list to include only **current** members.

For more information, MKPS may be reached by calling (209) 734-6150. Remember your support is vital to meeting the goals of our 1994 preservation agenda. Funds are used for worthwhile projects like the Multiple Properties Documentation program, historic restoration and maintenance, and the curation of exhibits and archives. Send in your check today!

### MEMORIALS

MKPS is grateful for contributions in memory of loved ones. If you would like to contribute to an existing memorial, or establish a new one, please indicate preference on the enclosed Membership Form.

## MEMORIALS

### Mineral King Preservation Society

Alles, Grace
Archer, Eunice
Avery, Elizabeth Hart
Barton, Muriel & Bob
Beam, Beulah
Becker, Richard
Bissiri, Attilio
Bissiri, Lucille Danks
Boswell, Gene
Bree, John Hyler
Breeze, Richard
Buckman, Ray & Gem
Bungay, Helene
Cochrun, George & Bea
Coughran, Tom B.
Dixon, Mary
Dungan, Jack
Edmiston, Frederick
Freeman, Carl
German, Winifred
Gilmour, Retha
Given, W.B.
Godsey, Robert & Mary
Hansen, Cal
Hart, Homer & Beulah
Holt, Wayne & Helen
Jordan, Lester O. & Marguerite K.
Leighton, Wesley G.
Montgomery, R.B. & Nora
Montgomery, Robert, Jr.
Parks, James L.
Penwell, Charlie
Peters, Virginia Ann
Pinkham, Eben & Josephine
Pogue, Sybl Scott
Rachford, Nolan
Reed, Dick
Rheinhold, Ruby Crowley
Roper, Myrtis E.
Slote, Elva
Smith, Vern
Voelz, Rebecca
Whitney, Dick & Jim
Willard, John C.
Wotton, Letta Jean Dalgleish
Zurcher, Fred

## LIFE MEMBERS

Bungay, Robert
Conrad, Kristy
Devol, Nicole
Devol, Randy
Devol, Sharon M.
Devol, Shirley
Dixon, Evander
Dobson, Edward Brown
Doctor, Joseph E.
Hastrup, Louise
Hicks, Bob
Livermore, Norman B., Jr.
Martin, Helen L.
Mitchell, Annie
Steiny, J. O.
Sweet, Ardeen
Tavares, Kathy
Tavares, Trevor

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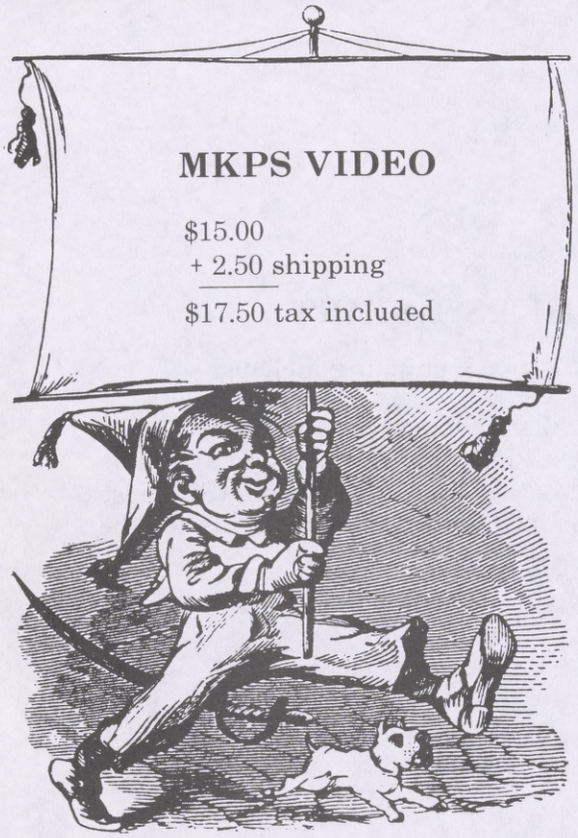



# SAN JOAQUIN ILLUSTRATED

*The Treasure of Mineral King*
*1993*

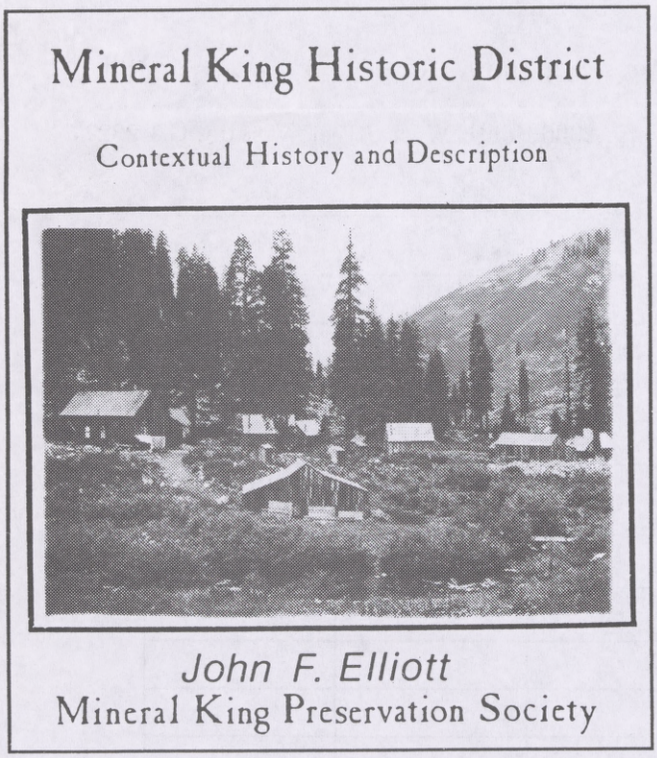
Color/16 minutes

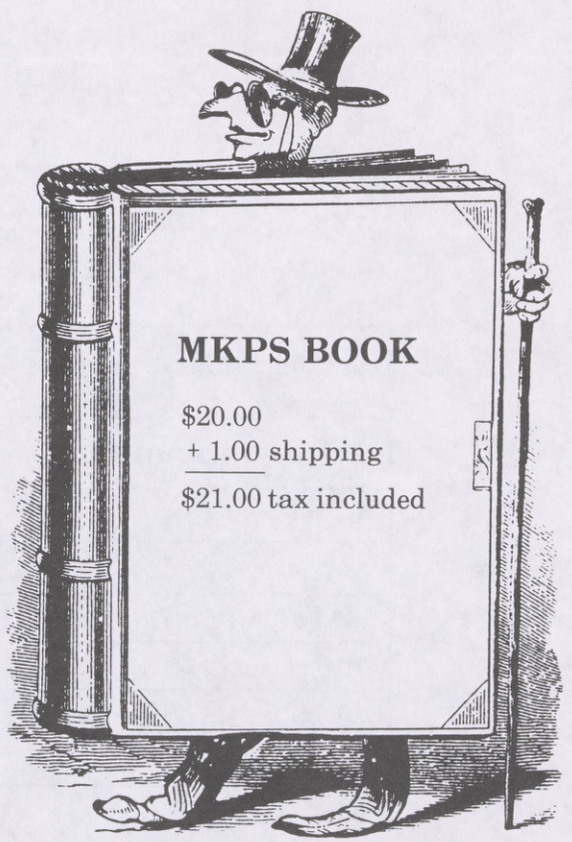
This informative PBS documentary written and edited by host, John Crancer, explores the colorful mining heritage of the Mineral King Valley. While the beauty of the Mineral King area of Sequoia National Park is overwhelming, digging into its history adds special flavor to this unique alpine valley.

*The latest and one of the best to get in the act (Mineral King books) is John F. Elliott, Three Rivers, historian for the Mineral King Preservation Society . . .*

*Elliott's book is profusely illustrated with photographs and drawings. His account of the development of Faculty Flat is worth the trouble of getting the book.*

*— Joe Doctor, Historian & Associate Editor, Woodlake Echo*
*November 17, 1993*




*Over the years the Mineral King Preservation Society has gathered an immense amount of material as well as pictures relating to Mineral King. As a person who has done some writing, I know only too well how hard it is to "not include everything." John Elliott has managed to weld all the material into a book with selectivity and understanding. The natural background, the history, the people, and the hope to preserve those elements all blend together.*

*I sincerely hope Mineral King will be preserved the "way it was." My congratulations to John Elliott and everyone who is working to preserve a beautiful and historic spot.*

*— Annie R. Mitchell, Historian*
*September 28, 1993*

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## Mineral King Preservation Society

1993 cabinart T-shirt featuring cabins of the Mineral King Historic District.

## MKPS T-SHIRT

$15.00 — tax & shipping included

The 1993 Mineral King Preservation Society T-shirt is tan with forest green, 100% cotton and available in adult sizes (M), (L), (XL), and children (S). These shirts are collectibles and make great gifts for the entire family.

**INFORMATION (209) 734-6150**

Clip here and mail to: Mineral King Preservation Society, 2936 South West Street, Visalia, CA 93277

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| DESCRIPTION | SIZE | QTY. | PRICE EACH | PRICE TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| MKPS VIDEO | | | $17.50 | |
| MKPS BOOK | | | $21.00 | |
| MKPS 1993 T-SHIRT (Adult) | X-Large | | $15.00 | |
| MKPS 1993 T-SHIRT (Adult) | Large | | $15.00 | |
| MKPS 1993 T-SHIRT (Adult) | Med. | | $15.00 | |
| MKPS 1993 T-SHIRT (Child) | Small | | $15.00 | |
| | | TOTAL ENCLOSED | | |

We still have a few assorted sizes with the 1992 cabinart design.
Please call for more information.

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